



**4th Quarter 2012  
Issues and Programming Report**

# **WHNT-TV QUARTERLY ISSUES/PROGRAM REPORT**

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS PROVIDING MOST SIGNIFICANT TREATMENT OF COMMUNITY ISSUES**

**Fourth Quarter 2012  
October 1, 2012 - December 31, 2012**

### ***LOCALLY-PRODUCED NEWS PROGRAMMING***

<b>Program</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>
WHNT News Early Morning	Monday-Friday	4:30-5:00 am
WHNT News 19 This Morning		5:00-7:00 am
WHNT News 19 @ Noon	Monday-Friday	12:00-12:30 pm
WHNT News 19 @ 5	Monday-Friday	5:00-5:30 pm
WHNT News 19 @ 6	Monday-Friday	6:00-6:30 pm
WHNT News 19 @ 6:30	Monday-Friday	6:30-7:00 pm
WHNT News 19 @ 9 <span style="color: red;">on 19.2</span>	Monday-Friday, Sun	9:00-9:30 pm
WHNT News 19 @ 10	Monday-Sunday	10:00-10:35 pm
WHNT News 19 This Morning	Saturday	6:00-8:30 am
WHNT News 19 @ 5p	Saturday	5:00-5:30 pm
WHNT News 19 @ 6p	Saturday	6:00-6:30 pm
WHNT News 19 @ 6a	Sunday	6:00-6:30 am
WHNT News 19 This Morning	Sunday	7:00-8:00 am
WHNT News 19 @ 5:30p	Sunday	5:30-6:00 pm

All above programs are locally produced programs presenting a mix of news, weather, sports, morning traffic and issue-related feature stories and segments.

***WHNT NEWS 19 Early Morning*** is morning news and weather a half-hour earlier, anchored by Steve Johnson and Michelle Stark, along with meteorologist Ben Smith. This early AM decision is a trend that's sweeping the country and now the Tennessee Valley.

***WHNT News 19 This Morning***, with Anchors Steve Johnson and Michelle Stark, Meteorologist Ben Smith, and morning traffic by Robert Reeves. Saturday and Sunday morning shows are anchored by David Kumbroch with meteorologist Jennifer Watson. They bring news, weather and traffic Monday-Friday with concerns most important to viewers in the Huntsville/Florence/Decatur DMA. Topics include education, race, economy, crime, road construction updates, politics, government and health.

***WHNT News 19 at Noon*** is a half-hour program Monday-Friday anchored by Carrie Marchese, Michelle Stark, and Steve Johnson with meteorologists Ben Smith and Brandon Chambers. Included in the program are many interviews with local area elected officials, government and civic leaders. Topics such as education, race, economy, crime, politics, government and health are often discussed. The duration of interviews is usually 5-7 minutes. WHNT has teamed up with the Better Business Bureau and does a segment every Tuesday interviewing Michele Mason from the BBB.

**WHNT News 19 at 5 & 6** (Sundays at 5:30) each lasts half an hour and covers the day's news. Anchors include Elise Morgan, Clarissa Stephens, Greg Screws and Lee Marshall and Meteorologists Jason Simpson and Ben Smith. Weekend anchors are Carson Clark, Beth Jett and meteorologist Brandon Chambers. They bring the news, sports, weather and traffic Monday-Friday with concerns that are most important to viewers in the Huntsville/Florence/Decatur DMA. Topics include education, race, economy, crime, road construction updates, politics, government and health.

**WHNT News 19 at 6:30** is a nightly newscast that lasts 30 minutes Monday-Friday. Anchors include Lee Marshall and Jerry Hayes and Meteorologist Jason Simpson. This newscast began after the April 27<sup>th</sup> tornadoes tore through the Tennessee Valley. It turned out to be a historic outbreak of a long-track of super cell tornadoes that at the end of the day left more than 250 people dead in the state of Alabama and many more injured. The tornadoes did millions of dollars in damage to homes, businesses, schools and churches. Out of the aftermath of the storms, a new daily 6:30pm newscast was born. Initially, the newscast focused solely on "After the Storm" coverage. That newscast continues to be produced, but now also features other news of local, state and regional significance.

**WHNT News 19 at 9** is nightly news that lasts 30 minutes. Monday-Friday Anchors include Clarissa Stephens, Greg Screws and Meteorologist Jason Simpson. Sunday anchors include Carson Clark, Beth Jett and Meteorologist Brandon Chambers. This newscast is designed to give the Tennessee Valley viewers an option to watch local news at a time period that is more conducive to working families. The newscast has features that are unique, such as no wait weather. Each night, we select a current news topic and take a closer look at details not generally revealed in other evening newscasts. The segment is interactive and viewers can chime in with their opinion and thoughts on a variety of subjects.

**WHNT News 19 at 10** is nightly news that lasts approximately 35 minutes. Monday through Friday Anchors include Elise Morgan, Jerry Hayes and Meteorologist Jason Simpson. Weekend Anchors include Carson Clark, Beth Jett and Meteorologist Brandon Chambers. They bring news, weather and sports with concerns that are most important to viewers in the Huntsville/Florence/Decatur DMA. Topics include education, race, economy, crime, road construction updates, politics, government and health.

## **4th Quarter Reports 2012**

### **October 1**

#### **Concussions: A Higher Risk**

WHNT News 19 sports anchor Edward Egros produced a special report about the latest research on concussions. The research indicates girl athletes are even more prone to concussions than boys. The report focused on what parents and coaches need to know.

### **October 2**

#### **Ava Grace Goes Home**

On this day, we aired a follow-up story about a little girl, Ava Grace, who was born severely premature. Her mother died a few days after Ava Grace's birth. The story updated viewers on how Ava Grace and her dad are doing. The child's health had dramatically improved and she had recently been able to go home thanks to the medical experts at Huntsville Hospital's Neonatal Unit.

### **October 4**

#### **Shoals Career Tech Event**

A 30-minute program that WHNT News 19 produced and aired in May was presented to an audience assembled for a career tech event in the Shoals (western part of our DMA). The organizers played our program and followed it with a panel discussion. There were about 150 teachers, administrators, parents, business leaders and elected officials in attendance.

### **October 6**

#### **Madison Street Festival**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in our coverage area hosts an annual festival for families. It features local arts & crafts and a parade. WHNT News 19 on-air anchors and behind-the-scenes employees participated in the parade driving our storm chase vehicle and handing out goodies for kids along the parade route.

### **October 9**

#### **Municipal Election Runoff**

On this day, voters headed to the polls in 22 municipalities across north Alabama. WHNT News 19 gathered, tabulated and displayed runoff election results on-air, online and on social media.

### **October 13**

#### **BBB Secure Your ID Day**

As the media partner for the Better Business Bureau of north Alabama, WHNT News 19 promotes an event that allows the public to get sensitive documents destroyed for free. This event has turned into a twice a year event. On this date, more than 400 cars came through the drive through shred event. More than 15,500 pounds of documents were shredded and 65 hard drives crushed.

### **October 13**

#### **Rocket City Weather Fest**

WHNT News 19 meteorologist Jennifer Watson represented the station at the third annual Rocket City Weather Fest at the University of Alabama Huntsville, held at the Shelby Center on the campus. It was a day of learning about weather with several presentations on radar, forecasting hurricanes and even storm spotter training by the National Weather Service. Meteorologist Jennifer Watson took Storm Hunter 19 (the station's severe weather chase vehicle) to the fest and showed attendees the station's newest tool for keeping track of severe weather in the Tennessee Valley.

### **October 22-25**

#### **Six People Murdered in Lincoln & Madison Counties**

A major news story broke on Oct. 22 when 3 people (2 women and a child) were found dead in Lincoln County, TN. The next day, three more bodies were discovered in Madison County, Alabama. Authorities believed the two cases were linked and a person of interest was developed. We had our main anchor reporting from the field on October 23 due to the severity of the crime and the complexity of the case.

Details continued to unfold over the next several days about the common thread between the victims. To date, only one person has been arrested and on charges not directly related to the deaths of the 6 people.

#### **October 24**

##### **Severe Weather Special**

Alabama has two distinct severe weather seasons where there is greater risk for tornadic activity. On this date, we produced a half-hour special to help viewers prepare for the fall severe weather season. Following the deadly outbreak of tornadoes on April 27, 2011, we began to notice that we were receiving a lot of graphic, detailed drawings from children for our daily "Sketch the Sky" segment depicting deadly tornadoes. For instance, one drawing showed cars, cows and people flying through the air. These drawings prompted us to ask a child psychologist to analyze the pictures and help parents understand whether they should be concerned about such drawings or whether it was a good coping mechanism for children who may be fearful and traumatized from April 27 tragedy. We also interviewed one child who submitted a very graphic picture. He explained his drawing and what he goes through when severe weather threatens now.

#### **October 25-27**

##### **Battleground Patriots**

WHNT News 19 embedded a reporter with Republican foot soldiers from north Alabama as they traveled by bus to the presidential battleground state of Ohio. Our series of reports showed how the local Republican faithful worked to get out the vote and sway undecided voters.

#### **October 29**

##### **The Plumber**

A WHNT News 19 hidden camera investigation exposed how Tommy Mayo, a Madison County plumber, is taking advantage of customers. A & A Plumbing has an "F" rating with the Better Business Bureau for taking money from people and not completing jobs. He was also under investigation with the state Plumbers & Steamfitters Board after several consumers came forward with various complaints ranging from delivery issues, problems with products and service and more. He also does not have a business license, even though he promotes that fact with clients and on advertisements. Our investigations ultimately lead Huntsville Police to ticket and arrest Mayo. In subsequent follow-up reports, we showed how he went to court and was fined.

#### **October 30**

##### **Secret Cemetery**

A runway expansion at the Madison County Executive airport unearths a secret cemetery containing the remains of at least 9 adults and children. Our story which aired at 10pm revealed who the people are, what the discovery means to the runway expansion and what will happen to the graves.

#### **November 1**

##### **Thirteen**

This special report that aired at 10pm was prompted by a viewer who contacted us asking us to **TAKE ACTION**. She says there are major discrepancies in Alabama's legal code defining what a "child" is - especially when it comes to sex abuse. It prompted us to ask, "When is a child really a child" under Alabama law? The parent says her daughter was 13 and a man in his 40s abused her. He took a plea deal for 144 months. She found out his release date is August the 5, 2017. She was surprised to see this date set much earlier than the 144 months. After some investigation, we found the offender can get "good time" because his victim was not under the age of 12. Alabama code 26-14-1 says a child is anyone under 18. Then in another law, a child is under the age of 12. Alabama section code 15-20-21-5. Our investigation exposed the inconsistencies in the law and how victims are further victimized because of it.

#### **November 3**

##### **Alabama-LSU Special**

The Alabama-LSU rivalry is probably the most heated in the SEC. WHNT News 19 produced a 30-minute pre-game special spotlighting the match-up. The special content included the story of a family who has one son that plays for Alabama and another that plays for LSU. Their dad played for Alabama.

## **November 5**

### **Gel Nail Dangers**

A special report on the potential dangers linked to gel nails. In short, a new study suggests the UV lights used to “set” or dry the gel nails could cause cancer because of the high concentration of UV and the thinness of the skin on hands. We talked to a dermatologist who agrees with the study findings, a local nail salon owner and a consumer.

## **November 6**

### **General Election**

We provided up-to-the-minute election results throughout the night on air, online, on social media and on mobile devices for how Alabama voted in the presidential election as well as many other state and local elections. In our late newscast, we also provided results, reaction and analysis to the most important races impacting our viewers.

## **November 12**

### **The True Cost of Panhandling**

WHNT News 19 assigned a reporter to go undercover to conduct an experiment on panhandling in Huntsville. He dressed up in a disguise and stood on a busy street corner with a sign that said “Homeless & Hungry – God Bless.” In no time at all, he had people handing him money at the intersection. In the time that he spent, he collected on average enough to earn roughly \$50,000/year tax free. The point of the experiment was to show that you don’t know if someone is truly in need when you hand over money to a beggar, nor do you know how the money is being used. We then interviewed an expert who works directly with the homeless. She advocates donating money to organizations that provide critical services to the homeless. In a 2<sup>nd</sup> installment of the story that aired in the next block, we “Paid it Forward” and donated the money we collected to Downtown Rescue Mission. Following our report, we received an email from Major Mark Satterlee of the Salvation Army who praised our report saying in part, *“I wanted to thank you for your reporting. I found myself agreeing with you on the main theme of your piece. It is true, that when well meaning people give cash to the homeless it short circuits the help they really need. There is no one to keep them accountable and despite where many of the homeless claim the money will go (food/shelter), in truth, it rarely ends up where they say (drugs/alcohol). I personally have worked with the homeless for many of my 33 years as a Salvation Army officer and this is a problem in every community I have been.”*

## **November 13**

### **New Madrid Fault**

This special report investigated the likelihood for a mega-earthquake on the New Madrid Fault and the level of damage/impact to the Tennessee Valley. Many scientists and geologists have been predicting a New Madrid “mega quake” that would do far more substantial damage than the more well-known ones in California.

## **November 14**

### **Leadership Management Academy Panel**

On this date, our News Director, Denise Vickers, served on a panel for Leadership Huntsville-Madison County’s Management Academy. The focus of the day was helping executives learn how to interact with the media, especially in times of crisis communication. There were about 40 members of the class.

## **November 15**

### **Huntsville Revisited**

This special report highlights a “remember-when” social media page that takes a look at all that was great in Huntsville from way back through the years. We introduced viewers to the creator and what prompted him to do this.

## **November 16, noon (VBC North Hall)**

### **Mayor Battle State of the City Address**

For the 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row, the Mayor of Huntsville has hosted an annual address on the “state of the city.” We carried his state of the city address live on our 2<sup>nd</sup> channel and on our website, whnt.com. In this year’s address, the mayor talked about plans for the future which included community improvements and

expansions of parks and trails. He also outlined a vision for making government and its services more accessible to taxpayers via the web and social media.

#### **November 19-December 10**

##### **Kids to Love Christmas for the Kids Drive**

On November 9, we kicked off a roughly month-long school drive to provide Christmas gifts to foster children all over Alabama and parts of Tennessee. We partnered with Jack's Family restaurants and a local automobile dealer to collect gifts and monetary donations to fulfill Christmas wish lists. On December 4, we hosted a daylong blitz drive from 5am-7pm and broadcasted live from 3 Jack's restaurants across our viewing area. On the last day of the drive, there were still approximately 90 wish lists unfilled – more than 60 list sponsors never made good on their commitment. We made an appeal to the public. The public came through in a big way donating more than \$35,000 at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. In all, our project raised roughly \$50,000 which in turn provided full Christmas wish lists for 1,100 children in foster care in 18 counties in north Alabama and southern Tennessee.

#### **November 19**

##### **Daycare Dangers**

This special report exposed how parents seeking information about critical violations at daycares can't easily access that information. It's not available online in a searchable database and while daycare operators should disclose it when asked, our hidden camera investigation revealed they don't. They're not required to do so. But, they are required to refer parents/consumers to a statewide hotline. None of the daycares in our investigation did that either.

#### **November 20**

##### **Plumber Follow-up: Making it Right**

After seeing our reports on the crooked plumber who had ripped off a local woman, another local plumbing company stepped up to make the situation right. The plumbing company fixed the viewer's plumbing problems at no charge to her.

#### **November 22-December 31**

##### **Military Greetings**

During the AM, 6 & 10pm newscasts, we showcased greetings from military members serving overseas who won't be home for the holidays.

#### **November 24**

##### **Iron Bowl**

The annual grudge match between Auburn University and University of Alabama is played on the Saturday after Thanksgiving on CBS. We produced a pre-game special that aired from 12:30-1:30pm leading up to the game. One story featured an Alabama fan who has been to 500 consecutive Crimson Tide games.

#### **November 25**

##### **Auburn Coach Gene Chizik Fired**

The day after Auburn lost 0-49 to Alabama, the school terminated the contract of its head coach of four years, Gene Chizik. Our coverage included reaction from fans and players as well as prospects for the future head coach.

#### **December 1**

##### **SEC Championship**

Leading up to the conference championship game that would decide which team would go to the National Championship, we produced a 30-minute special examining the strengths and weaknesses of the two teams – Alabama & Georgia. In one story, a local high school team helped demonstrate what the Georgia Bulldogs would do on defense and how Alabama would react to counteract their game plan.

**December 4****Auburn New Head Coach**

Less than two weeks after firing its head coach, the Auburn Tigers named its new guy to lead the squad, Gus Malzahn. Most recently, Malzahn was the head coach for Arkansas State and he was the offensive coordinator for Auburn for 3 years, including the year the Tigers won its most recent national championship. The story developed as breaking news late that afternoon and we covered the story with multiple angles throughout all newscasts as well as online and on social media.

**December 5****Career Tech Special Leadership Class 26**

On this date, Leadership Huntsville-Madison County showed our career-tech documentary, "Pathways to Success: Rethinking Education in Alabama" to Leadership Class 26 as part of its class day focused on education. There are approximately 50 adult professionals in the class.

**December 6****Integrated Warning Team**

Our chief meteorologist, Jason Simpson, participated in a daylong conference focused on severe weather preparedness, communication coordination and information sharing between the National Weather Service/EMA/local broadcasters/emergency responders in order to improve the way we deliver critical information to the public. He also served on a panel focused on discussing the challenges of delivering severe weather information to the public on multiple platforms (on air, online, on social media, etc.).

**December 6-7****High School Football State Championships**

Two Tennessee Valley high school football teams made it to the state championships. Madison Academy won the state championship in its division. It was the first state football title for a "Huntsville" school won in the playoff system. Tanner High also won the state championship in its division. It was the school's first-ever championship. The state championship games for all 6 high school football classifications were played in Auburn's Jordan-Hare Stadium.

**December 7****Blood Drive**

We hosted the LifeSouth Blood Mobile at our station on this date and held a blood drive from noon-6pm. We invited viewers and our staff to donate blood which is especially critical during the holidays.

**December 14 (and beyond)****Newtown, Connecticut, School Shooting**

On this date, a young man in Newtown, Connecticut, opened fire in an elementary school killing more than 2 dozen children and adults. We localized the big national story with multiple story angles including talking to a local psychologist on how to talk to kids about traumatic experiences and the superintendent for Madison City Schools on how schools react in crisis situations. The shooting happened on a Friday. On the following Sunday, area parents were concerned about the safety of their children in local schools. That prompted administrators to increase security at schools to ease the fears of parents and children.

**December 24****Santa Tracker**

On Christmas Eve, we produce special cut-ins on air and coverage online starting at 5am through midnight for our young viewers so they can track Santa's progress across the globe.

**October/November/December****Taking Action to Get You a Job**

We continued our monthly "TAGJ" project in the 4th quarter. In our morning newscast and our 5pm newscast, we showcase job openings in the Tennessee Valley. We also post the job openings on our website, [whnt.com](http://whnt.com).



**October 9, November 8, December 12****Sketch the Sky**

Typically on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month, we host a Sketch the Sky party at Sci-Quest, the local hands-on science museum. One month this quarter, the date had to be changed due to the general election.

Children whose drawings of the weather were featured on air get to come to the museum for a party and a member of our meteorology team broadcasts the weather live for our 5 & 6pm newscast from the event.

Kids get to ask questions about science and meteorology and are featured on the air. In addition, our News Director, Denise Vickers, also serves on the board of the non-profit museum, Sci-Quest.

**Wednesdays at 5pm****Tools for Teachers**

WHNT News 19 continued its weekly “Tools for Teachers” franchise at 5pm. Parents, students, teachers or principals can nominate a deserving public school teacher. Schools of selected teachers receive \$319 from our business partner. Then, each Wednesday at 5pm, we share the story of why the teacher is deserving and their surprise when they learn about winning the award. They share how they will use the money to benefit their students.

**Fridays through football season****Football Friday**

Each Friday night at 10pm in the fall, WHNT News 19 provides expanded coverage of local high school football games. On Wednesdays, we feature player profiles.

**Thursdays at 10pm****Restaurant Ratings**

WHNT News 19 continued its weekly franchise called “Restaurant Ratings” on Thursday nights at 10pm. In it, we reveal some of the biggest offenders in the county health department inspections. We also award a weekly virtual “golden spoon” to a high scoring restaurant. We also post all the restaurant inspection scores on our website.

**Mondays at 5pm****Kids to Love**

WHNT NEWS 19 anchor, Lee Marshall, was a foster child. So, as a successful adult, she created a non-profit organization called “Kids to Love.” We continued our weekly franchise focused on adoption issues and children who are looking for “forever homes.” Our commitment also includes promoting a “See Meth, Stop Meth” tipline. Viewers are encouraged to report any incidents of meth-making, especially ones where children may be present in the home.

**Fridays at 6am****Home from War**

Starting on October 26, we aired a weekly franchise in our 6am half-hour that focused on the challenges facing our community’s military veterans who are returning home from war. The subjects ranged from job reintegration, PTSD, benefits claims and a family whose child was born with severe birth defects. We worked with a local non-profit organization called “Still Serving Veterans” to identify relevant subjects. In addition, our News Director, Denise Vickers, also serves on the board of the non-profit organization.

**Mondays November & December at 6am****Money Saving Mondays**

Each Monday in our 6am half-hour of the morning newscast, we produced a special story featuring tips on how viewers could save money. Subjects ranged from websites to help consumers get discounts, coupons and cash back from purchases to ways to live frugally and save money by altering typical daily routines and expenditures. We also showed viewers do-it-yourself ways of saving money through use of household items and dollar store items. Our reports included opportunities to earn money through selling Halloween candy to a dentist through a buy-back initiative and ways to have a happy social life by throwing thrifty, yet fun parties.

### **5pm franchise, October-December**

#### **Fighting for You**

Starting in June 2012, we launched a new franchise called “Fighting for You.” We tackle issues that every day people are facing. When viewers have exhausted all their options, we offer to “fight for them” and help them get answers to problems, resolutions to issues. We typically air 2-3 stories per week in our 5pm newscast. Some of the subjects we tackled this quarter included the story of a concerned parent who witnessed a bus driver running a stop sign every day with kids on board the bus. Concerned about the safety of children, the viewer had the evidence on video and had taken it to the bus company. But, nothing was done. When we got involved, management acknowledged the problem and promised to take action against the offending bus driver. In December, a viewer brought to our attention that new lights on a heavily travelled road (Research Park Blvd) had not been turned on. Turns out, no one in a position of authority knew the lights were off. It ended up being a mix-up over whether the lights were in the county or city and paperwork that hadn’t been filled out. Also, in that same month, we got Priceville Jr High their money back from a photography company. The company owed the school money for work from 2010.

#### **Ongoing**

##### **Weather in the Tennessee Valley Classroom Project**

In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2012, we continued our comprehensive Weather in the Tennessee Valley Classroom Project which features a daily weather question and answer in our morning newscast which we call, “Weather 101.”